

Lines of Opportunity

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BETWEEN THE LINES



Randy Peers
Executive Director

2012 has so far been an amazing year for OBT! We received a new contract from New York State to provide job skills training for the conversational English population in our Adult Literacy program. This unique initiative combines needed English practice with vocational credential training in computers and customer service. The creativity of this program caught the attention of NYS Secretary of State, Cesar Perales, who visited the program last May.

(See story on page 3.)

OBT also held its first successful Summer Soirée fundraiser on June 6th at Hudson Terrace in Manhattan. Maybe it was a positive omen, but just as I pulled up to the venue that evening, the space shuttle Enterprise was being lowered by crane onto the deck of the Intrepid just across the west side highway. It was an amazing sight to see, and I knew it was going to be a great night. The event was a resounding success, raising over \$65,000 in general operating support for our programs. **(Read more on page 2.)**

OBT and some of our courageous trainees were featured both in print and on television. El Diario La Prensa ran an article on the educational and employment challenges many Puerto Rican youth face in NYC. Alejandro Rivera, one of our Sunset Park trainees, was featured as part of the story. Yaritza Muñoz, one of our Bushwick trainees, was interviewed along with OBT Youth Counselor Evelyn Ortiz on the ABC News show Tiempo with Joe Torres. They spoke about how OBT helps young adults get back on track in life and in their careers.

Finally, OBT began working on an important partnership with the YMCA of Greater New York (YMCA) to bring our services to Jamaica, Queens. Jamaica is a community in desperate need of programs that work directly with disconnected young people. The planning around this innovative partnership has just begun, but we are excited to be working hand-in-hand with an organization that has a 160-year track record and a network of 24 current or future sites around NYC that provide quality services to young people. OBT and the YMCA is a partnership in the making that could possibly transform the landscape of disconnected youth programming for years to come.

If we can envision it, we can make it happen!

Summer Soirée a Success!

June 6, 2012 was a special night for OBT – our first annual Summer Soirée was a resounding success and sensational celebration! The event raised over \$65,000 in funds that will go towards our mission **“to help disadvantaged youth and adults recognize their own self-worth, and advance toward self-sufficiency and financial security through job training, academic reinforcement, improved life skills, job placement, and support services.”** We honored three key individuals who have advanced employment and educational outcomes for young adults throughout their careers – *Lisette Nieves*, Belle Zeller Distinguished Visiting Professor in Public Policy at Brooklyn College; *Andrew H. Kimball*, President and CEO of Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation; and *David C. Banks*, President and CEO of The Eagle Academy Foundation.

Emcee Jeanine Ramirez from NY1 presided over the exciting evening which was set in a beautiful indoor/outdoor space at the Hudson Terrace in Manhattan. Showing their support of OBT, New York City Comptroller John Liu and Council Member Vincent Gentile were in attendance, as well as representatives from the offices of Council Member Sara Gonzalez, Council Member Diana Reyna, Assemblymember Felix Ortiz and New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery. During a short program, the elected officials, OBT’s leadership, honorees, and trainees spoke briefly. Honoree Lisette Nieves candidly stated the facts of the crisis OBT works to address on a daily basis: **“Over 6 million young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are out of school and not working.”**

In addition to cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, the event featured a silent auction that included exciting items such as a signed Jeremy Lin (NY Knicks) jersey, a week-long stay at a vacation home in Montauk and free trumpet lessons from OBT staff member and professional musician Rodney Siau.

Demonstrating the difference OBT’s programs can make, two young adults, Alejandro Rivera and Yaritza Muñiz, shared their stories of transformation with the gala guests. Ms. Muñiz is a trainee in our Young Adult Internship Program at OBT’s Bushwick location. Ms. Muñiz shared her courageous story, which started with sexual abuse as a child to drug use and homelessness as a teen. Ms. Muñiz said she found OBT **“...when I realized I needed a change.”** Her first impression of OBT was that **“...the atmosphere was very professional and there was a sense of optimism in the air.”** Ms. Muñiz shared how OBT helped her earn the *National Retail Federation Customer Service* and *Microsoft Office Specialist* Certifications, obtain an internship at Spanish Broadcasting System, and submit applications to colleges. The post-soirée success for Ms. Muñiz continued as she was a guest on the ABC Sunday News show, *Tiempo*, with host Joe Torres, which aired on Sunday, June 17th.

OBT Board Chair Sean Lafferty summed up the evening in his remarks, **“...at the end of the day, tonight is about our youth, who every day depend on the work we do. OBT is proud to take on the challenge of working with amazing young people who demonstrate the capacity to improve their lives through hard work and dedication.”**

OBT would like to thank all of our partners and sponsors, including The Brooklyn Navy Yard; Lutheran HealthCare; SIMS; United Healthcare; The Eagle Academy Foundation; TD Bank; National Grid; Public Works Consulting with Scott Zucker Consulting; Skody Scot & Company, CPAs; Con Edison; YMCA; Brooklyn Business Systems; Health Plus Amerigroup; LG; New Century; Ernst & Young; Silverman Sclar Shin & Byrne PLLC; Aflac; Alameda Services; Brooklyn Brewery; Edgian Press; and Tuthilltown Spirits.

Keep an eye out for next year’s invitation – when we will celebrate 30 years of service! OBT is continuing to accept donations, which can be sent in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your support!



Spotlight on Success: Jennifer Ortega

When Jennifer Ortega came to OBT, she was a financially strapped and frustrated college drop-out, ready to enter the workforce – but in need of the skills and support to start earning her way to self-sufficiency. After high school, Ms. Ortega took the next step that many graduating seniors believe is the best and only option for a career: college. Thus, Ortega enrolled at an expensive for-profit college in NY. Although she received financial aid and took out a loan for over \$9,000, she could only afford the first semester.

Not wanting to dig herself deeper and deeper into debt, Ms. Ortega was ready to work – and decided to take a different route to gainful employment – enrolling in a job training program that leads to industry-recognized certifications.

With the goal of gaining new skills and credentials, Ms. Ortega enrolled in OBT's 20-week Youth Education and Job Training Program. She earned both the *Microsoft Office Specialist* (MOS) and *National Retail Federation Customer Service* Certifications, and she became captain of her OBT Debate Team. After a stunning performance at Debate Day, she caught the eye of a recruiter at Bond Street Group staffing agency. Ms. Ortega received a temporary position at Bond Street Group, where she made an impression on Executive Recruiter Alisa Sohn, who said of Jennifer, **"She is an extremely hard and diligent worker, probably one of the most detailed people. . . Her skills are what set her apart. . . One of Jennifer's greatest strengths was never letting her environment or surroundings bring her down."** Ms. Ortega said, **"She eventually found me a permanent position as an administrative assistant at Guidepost Solutions, an investigation firm."** Ms. Ortega has been working at Guidepost for over a year, during which time she has worked on a variety of projects – including a temporary assignment in New Orleans for the BP oil spill.



Jennifer Ortega working at Guidepost Solutions

With an income, Ms. Ortega decided to try college again. According to her, **"I am paying my own way at BMCC, while still paying off [previous] loans."** Ms. Ortega is now in her third semester at BMCC, pursuing an associate's degree in writing and literature, after which she plans to enroll in a four year school for a bachelor's degree.

NY Secretary of State Visits JSELL

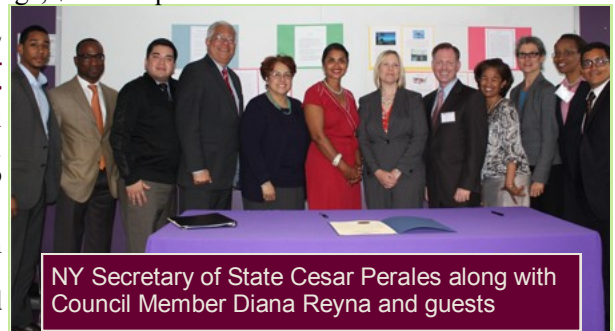
In January, OBT was awarded a competitive grant to provide job skills training to low-income, adult ESOL students as part of our successful Adult Education and Literacy Program. This Job Skills for English Language Learners Program (JSELL) is an innovative program for adults to learn computer and job readiness skills while advancing their professional spoken and written English language skills. Students prepare to take the *Microsoft Office Specialist* (MOS) and *National Retail Federation Customer Service* certification exams in classes co-taught by a specialist instructor and ESOL teacher. Students also receive on-site vocational counseling and job placement assistance to enter or advance in the American workplace.

The JSELL program has already received recognition at the state and federal level. On Monday, May 21, OBT was honored to host NY Secretary of State Cesar A. Perales at our Bushwick location, in commemoration of Community Action Month. Secretary Perales was hosting Director of Community Services Jeannie Chaffin from the Federal Health and Human Services Department, who was in NY to visit successful CSBG-funded programs. Mr. Perales delivered a proclamation to OBT from Governor Cuomo commending us on our work. Council Member Diana Reyna also attended. OBT was delighted to be selected as one of only two agencies visited in New York. Additionally, the NYS Department of State, as per Governor Cuomo's State of the State announcement, will soon be launching the Office for New Americans (ONA). The mission of ONA will be to provide a broad range of services to new immigrants in an effort to ensure that they have **"every opportunity to realize their full potential."**

During the visit, Secretary Perales met JSELL student, Alba Iris Figueroa, who recently passed the rigorous MOS exam and shared, **"I joined the JSELL Program because it is a very complete program that helps to develop your skills and your knowledge. It is the best opportunity to increase your skills and achieve your goals in the professional [workplace]."** OBT's MOS Certification recipients enter the workforce earning, on average, \$2 more per hour.

Fellow JSELL student, Katy Lugo, progressed through OBT's ESOL class to the advanced JSELL program. Lugo states, **"This is a very important program because you have different options to improve your English, your computer skills and certifications, and to find a good job."** Ms. Lugo is also working with the College Access Coordinator, Shant Melkonian, to complete her college applications. She plans to work and study part-time after graduating from the JSELL Program.

The JSELL Program will be welcoming its third cohort of students in July and looks forward to even more success to come. For more information, please contact Michelle Lopolito, Director of Adult Education and Literacy, at 718-387-1600 or mlopolito@obtjobs.org.



NY Secretary of State Cesar Perales along with Council Member Diana Reyna and guests

OBT Welcomes New Staff

**Irasel Bueno****Bushwick - Corporate Recruiter**

Irasel Bueno is coming to OBT from Good Shepherd Services, where she was a Case Worker for adolescents in foster care for a little over two years. At Good Shepherd, she developed her love of working with young adults and their families. Prior to being a Case Worker, Irasel was in the service industry, catering to the needs of others while working in hospitality, finance and retail. These industries have provided her with the opportunity to do what she loves the most which is “help others.” Irasel graduated from City College of New York with a BA in Psychology.

**Flutra Gorana****Bushwick - Director,
Out of School Youth Program (OSY)**

Flutra Gorana, formally of CAMBA and Safe Horizon, joined OBT as the Director of the Youth Education and Job Training program at Bushwick. She brings with her over thirteen years’ experience leading workforce development and other social services programs. She was most recently at CAMBA, and before that at the Department of Children and Families for the State of Florida. At CAMBA, she was responsible for managing three performance-based workforce contracts, including youth services programs. She does volunteer work with the West African Community in Staten Island. She also volunteered to help establish a community based social service organization in Lebanon and Kosovo. A graduate of CUNY with a degree in international business, Flutra is trilingual (English, Albanian, Arabic), and is originally from Montenegro.

**Adam Kibble****BWRC - Corporate Recruiter**

Adam Kibble comes to OBT with four years of corporate staffing experience from Stride & Associates in NYC, and two years in public policy as a staffer at the Colorado House of Representatives in his home city of Denver. For the spring and summer of 2012, he will head up Job Development for OBT’s Bushwick Workforce Resource Center (BWRC). His goals are to open new employer partnerships, establish best practices for BWRC job placement services, and to improve outcomes for OBT’s target population. Adam obtained his BA in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and in the fall of 2012, he will begin pursuing his MBA at the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver.

**Nancy Rosario****Bushwick - Senior Program Associate**

Nancy Rosario came to OBT from Callen-Lorde Community Healthcare Clinic, where she was a Senior Patient Care Associate/Trainer for five years. She catered to the needs of the LGBT Community and Adolescents. Prior to being a Senior Patient Care Associate, she was a Facilitator Enroller for six years at Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center. She attended Allen School for Nurses to become a licensed Nurse’s Aide, after which she did private nursing for two years. Although she came from a nursing background, her passion is helping people succeed. She has come to OBT as a Senior Program Associate for the Adult Literacy Program and enjoys bettering the future of the Bushwick Community.

Happenings Around OBT



MAY 23, 2012
Service Learning at Prospect Park

Giving back to our community!!!



MAY 24, 2012
Trainees building a playground at CCC!



MAY 4, 2012
Professional Development with CoreNet Global



MAY 31, 2012
On-site Career fair, OBT Bushwick



MAY 8, 2012
Service Learning at St. John's Bread and Life Soup Kitchen



MAY 24, 2012
Service Learning at Calvary Community Church (CCC)



MAY 21, 2012
JSell student being interviewed by Brooklyn News 12



MAY 16, 2012
St. Anselm Workforce Ministry Resume Workshop. Provided by OBT



JUNE 7, 2012
Stay At Work (SAW) Program's summer picnic



MAY 17, 2012
JSell students at the Immigrant Heritage Celebration

First Annual Summer Soiree 2012 !!!



MAY 17, 2012
JSell students!!!



Randolph Peers, Lisette Nieves, David C. Banks, and Tamara Dews



Breita Rivers, Angel Roman and his wife Nancy from DYCD



Our beautiful OBT staff!!!



Council Member Vincent Gentile with OBT staff

Opportunities For a Better Tomorrow

Randolph Peers
Executive Director

Administrative Office
SUNSET PARK
783 Fourth Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11232
Tel: 718-369-0303
Fax: 718-369-1518

BUSHWICK
25 Thornton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206
Tel: 718-387-1600
Fax: 718-387-5005

**BUSHWICK
WORKFORCE
RESOURCE CENTER**
280 Wyckoff Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11237
Tel: 718-381-3222
Fax: 718-381-3220

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Employer Spotlight: Dynamex

dx Business Services, a division of Dynamex, has been working with OBT since 2008 and in the last two years alone has given young adults from OBT over 40 job and internship opportunities. Why does "North America's leading...transportation and logistics services company," that works with Fortune 500 companies across the US and Canada, choose to staff their operations with OBT trainees? It is because of "the people I deal with at OBT, the flexibility, the fact they understand my product and what I do... the quality of the people," says Wayne Ruben, Director of Business Services at dx Business Services.

OBT and Dynamex have designed a partnership that works for them. Dynamex hires graduates of our Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) and Youth Education and Job Training Program. While many are hired directly into full time employment, some trainees start at Dynamex as

interns. "It gives me a 90 day try-out...and if it clicks...there's no training period; it's seamless," says Ruben.

Alberto Canales, an OBT YAIP graduate and Office Assistant at Dynamex, started as an intern. When he proved to be a fit, he was hired full time in November 2011. Mr. Canales reflects the "raw eagerness to better [himself]" that Ruben looks for when he hires a young adult. As a new father, Mr. Canales not only values the professional growth experience he obtains at Dynamex, he appreciates the ability to "support his family and himself."

Kristopher Handberry, also an OBT YAIP graduate, was hired as an Intercept Center Clerk after his internship and is about to celebrate his one year anniversary at Dynamex. Mr. Handberry also appreciates the many "learning experiences" he gains working for Dynamex.



Kristopher Handberry & Alberto Canales at work with Wayne Ruben, Director of Business Services at dx Business Services

Ruben couldn't have said it better when describing the relationship between Dynamex and OBT: "It benefits everyone involved."

dxBusiness Services provides companies with office support services ranging from reception to mail processing. More importantly for OBT, it provides young adults with jobs! To learn more about dxBusiness Services, visit dxbusinessservices.com. If you are also interested in free staffing assistance with OBT, please contact Terri Saucier, Coordinator of Employer Engagement, at 718-387-1600 or tsaucier@obtjobs.org.